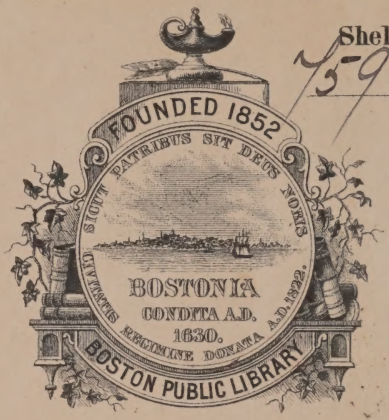
BOSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY
3 9999 08654 987 8



Shelf No.
Y5-96.77

Heliotype Printing Co.

7594.4
M11 6357.50
J344.164

REPORT

OF THE

SPECIAL COMMITTEE

OF THE

PRIMARY SCHOOL BOARD,

ON A

PORTION OF THE REMARKS

OF THE

GRAMMAR MASTERS.

BOSTON:
JOHN H. EASTBURN, CITY PRINTER.

1844.

In Primary School Committee,
Boston, October 8, 1844.

Voted, That Messrs. Bayley, Jones, Charles Brooks, Woart, and Brown, be a Committee to consider the supposed allusion to the Boston Primary Schools, on the 98th and 99th pages of a pamphlet lately published by the Masters of the Grammar Schools of Boston, entitled "Remarks on the Seventh Annual Report of Horace Mann, Secretary of the Board of Education;" to report at a future meeting.

Attest.

ALVAN SIMONDS, *Secretary.*

At a meeting of the Primary School Committee of the City of Boston, held November 8, 1844, a Report was presented from a Committee appointed at a previous meeting; which Report was unanimously adopted in the following form, and ordered to be printed and circulated under the direction of the same Committee.

Attest,

ALVAN SIMONDS, *Secretary.*

REPORT.

The Special Committee of your Board, appointed to examine pages 98 and 99 of a pamphlet entitled "Remarks on the Seventh Annual Report of the Hon. Horace Mann, Secretary of the Massachusetts Board of Education," having attended to that duty, present the following

REPORT:

The pamphlet of "Remarks" is published with the expressed approval of 31 of the Masters connected with the Grammar Schools of this City, and therefore merits the careful attention and consideration of all who are interested and engaged in the subject of education.

Our attention, however, is confined to pages 98 and 99, which we have examined with due care, and find them to contain several statements in reference to the Primary Schools under the control of your Board, deserving our serious notice, and which are as follows:

"The elements must be taught somewhere. If neglected in the primary schools, they must be taught in the grammar schools. And thus the order of things is reversed, and disarrangement introduced into the whole school system. The teacher who is employed, and paid, for instructing in the higher branches, is compelled to devote time and attention to the studies appropriately belonging to schools of a lower grade. This is found to be

the case, to too great an extent, in the schools of our city. We do not say this to the disparagement of the primary school teachers, or from the belief, that there is a want of fidelity on their part. We believe it to be, in part, at least, owing to the system of teaching, or rather want of system, in the primary schools. The books used in these schools, according to the author's own account of them, are adapted to either system. This is equivalent to saying that they are adapted to neither; for it is impossible to see how two methods, so entirely different from each other, as those under consideration, can be embraced in one series of books. After repeated inquiries made in many of the primary schools of the city, we are persuaded, that the teachers have taken the full amount of license allowed them, by the author of the books which they use. Some begin with the alphabet; others require the children to learn eight or ten words, from which they teach the several letters, though not in the order in which they are arranged in the alphabet. Some carry the process of teaching words to a greater extent, yet require the child to learn to spell, before teaching him to read. Others, as will appear, teach the children to read, without making them at all acquainted with the letters. One evil, resulting from this want of system, is a great neglect of spelling. It is the opinion of those masters who have been longest in the service, and can therefore compare the results of the two systems, that in respect to spelling, among the candidates for admission from the primary schools, there has been a great deterioration during the trial of the new system; a period of about six years. The following instance, which occurred a few weeks since, though perhaps, an extreme case, well illustrates a large class of cases, in which there is a deplorable neglect of spelling. A girl in her tenth year, presented herself for admission into one of the grammar schools, with a certificate of qualification from the district committee. The master gave her to read, the sentence beginning with the words, "Now if Christ be preached," &c. The third word, she called "Jesus," and persisted in saying it was so pronounced. She was requested to spell it; the master, at the same time, pointing out the first letter. This letter, she called "Jesus." The first letter of the alphabet was pointed out; the pupil uttered "and"; the second letter was shown her; "but," was her response. The letter *m*, she called "man." She was sent to the assistant teachers

of the school, who found her totally ignorant of the alphabet. The master sent her back to the primary school, with her certificate endorsed, "not qualified; can be admitted only by the authority of the sub-committee of the grammar school."

And, here we may remark, that the testimony of able primary school teachers themselves, who have tried both systems, is adverse to this mode of teaching reading. They declare that in the end, nothing is gained, but much is lost; that the task of teaching the alphabet, and the art of combining letters into words, are more difficult, and less satisfactory, than if the child had begun with the letters."

There are seven subjects in these statements to which we would particularly advert.

First. It is stated to be "the case to too great an extent, in the schools of our City," that the elements are not taught.

Second. That this neglect (of teaching "the elements") is "in part, at least, owing to the system of teaching, or rather want of system in the Primary Schools."

Third. That the course of instruction pursued in these schools, leads to "a great neglect of spelling."

Fourth. That the books used in the Primary Schools are not adapted to the wants of these Schools.

Fifth. That children are taught, in some of our Primary Schools, "to read without making them at all acquainted with the letters."

Sixth. That the information of these Masters, as to the mode of instruction, is derived from "repeated inquiries made in many of the Primary Schools of the City."

Seventh. An instance of a case is given to illustrate "a large class of cases," and as tending to show,

that "there is a deplorable neglect of spelling" in our Primary Schools.

Your Committee thought that the best way of meeting six of these statements, would be to propose sundry questions to the Teachers of our Primary Schools; and accordingly they prepared and presented seven, to every Teacher, and each one gave an immediate written reply, without having an opportunity to consult or advise with one another.

The Questions were as follows:

1. What method do you use to teach your children to spell, and in what class are they taught the Alphabet?
2. Do you teach children to read "without making them at all acquainted with the letters?"
3. Do you think that the system of the Books used in the school leads to a "neglect of spelling," and is it your practice to teach children to spell?
4. Do you believe that the system of the books adopted in your school is suited to the capacities of the children?
5. How many Masters of the Grammar Schools have visited your school during the past six years, and at what dates, and have such Masters made any inquiry as to your mode of teaching spelling and reading?
6. Have you known of an "instance" of a child being sent from the Primary School to the Grammar School, "totally ignorant of the Alphabet?"
7. How many children sent from your school to the Grammar School, during the last six years, have been rejected for want of suitable qualifications?

From the replies of the Teachers, it appears,

First. That in all the Primary Schools in this City, "the elements," or Alphabet, are taught in the fourth or lowest class.

Second. That in no single instance are the children taught "to read without making them at all acquainted with the letters."

Third. That in the opinion of the Teachers the system of the books used in the Schools does not lead to a neglect of spelling; and all the Teachers, without an exception, teach the children to spell.*

Fourth. The Teachers approve of the books now used by them in the Schools, and consider them adapted to the capacities of the children; and in this connexion, your Committee would state, that of the 117 Teachers, there are only 3, who give an unqualified objection to the books and system; 9 others qualify their answers by suggesting what they think would be an improvement in the books and system, their principal objection being that the words are not divided into syllables in the first book.

Fifth. That during the last six years, not over twenty visits have been made by the Masters of the Grammar Schools to the Primary Schools. Six of these visits were made by the supposed author of these statements, in the latter part of last June, and he then made inquiries as to the mode of instruction. The other visits, with one or two exceptions, had no reference to the method of teaching.

Sixth. Not any of the Teachers have known, or heard, of children being sent from the Primary to the Grammar Schools, ignorant of the Alphabet, excepting the case mentioned in the pamphlet.

Seventh. Only 46 of the children sent from our Primary Schools to the Grammar Schools, within six years, have been rejected; of these, 10 were rejected at one time *because they did not read loud enough;*

*One Teacher remarks, in answer to the first part of question 3d, "I do not, but the reverse."

Another says: "I think the books used in our Schools are excellent, and those who cannot teach and be taught by them, must be hopeless subjects."

the rejection of nearly all the others was said to be owing to some defect in *reading*. Your Committee have found, that 34 of the number rejected for want of qualifications, were sent from the *Intermediate* Schools, which are not ranked as *Primary* Schools, but designed to take up and prepare for the Grammar Schools a class of children older than those belonging to the Primary Schools; these therefore being an exception to the Primary Schools, should not be regarded in the report. Deducting, therefore, 34 from the whole number, 46, will leave 12 rejected from the Primary Schools for want of qualifications, during the six years; this, certainly, cannot justify the idea which is entertained by some that "it is not uncommon for children to be rejected for want of qualifications." Your Committee would add, that deficiency in spelling has never been made the reason for such rejection, *in a single instance.* During these six years, there have been sent from our Schools to the Grammar Schools about 8,000 children.

In answer to the seventh subject, we present to the Board the following account received from Dr. Odin.

To the Sub-Committee of the Primary School Board.

GENTLEMEN:

In accordance with your request, I will endeavor to give you the language used by me in the statement of facts to the Board, touching the case of the girl noticed in the "Remarks" of the Masters, as sent to the Grammar School. I stated, that the history of the girl could be traced back to her first entrance into any School; and that her first teacher, several years ago, taught her the alphabet and words of two

or three letters; and that her successive teachers declare that she knew her letters, and was capable of reading easy words; that my first knowledge of her, was when I gave her a permit to enter the School for Special Instruction, on the first of May, 1843. I then gave the following account of her course, which I have from her Teacher. When she entered the School, she was placed in the Second Division of the Third Class—could spell easy words, and read the first lessons in "My First School-Book." In reading, she had the habit of spelling *all* the words before pronouncing them; and at no time did she appear ignorant of the letters of the alphabet. In August, 1843, she was advanced to the First Division of the Third Class; and in November following, to the Second Class. While in this class, the habit of spelling before pronouncing was eradicated. The only difficulty remaining, was, her being so confused when spelling a word wrongly, as to be unable, readily, to correct the error; but before she left the class, she overcame this infirmity sufficiently to spell well. January 1, 1844, she became a member of the First Class, and would learn a lesson, and read as correctly, and with as much expression, as any child in the class,—particularly in verse,—as she seemed to acquire the sentiment more readily than the other children. If a new lesson was to be read, she would hesitate, be confused, and make mistakes, till she had learned the sense, and then she was as ready as any one. She had, from a peculiar organization of mind, the habit of using synonymes in her reading—(frequently words better than the text.) She was the best arithmetician in the School, readily answering any question in Emerson's First Part. She had like-

wise a readiness in printing letters and words on her slate, which was quite creditable, and induced her Teacher to urge her forward, that she might sooner enjoy the advantages of a Grammar School.

This girl, thus qualified, was presented for my examination, on the 29th of March, 1844, in company with nine other children, comprising the first class. Her Teacher, at the time, expressed a fear that she might not appear sufficiently well, to receive a certificate, because she was so readily confused, and, when in this state of mind, apt to commit errors. I spent upwards of an hour in the examination; she appeared so well prepared, in all the branches requisite, and in some, if not all, so superior to her classmates, that I did not hesitate to give my certificate, and directed her to go to the Franklin School. A few days after, a certificate which I had given to a boy of the same class, was handed to me, on which was endorsed, "not qualified, can be admitted only by consent of the Sub-Committee of the School," or words to the same effect. Whether signed by the Grammar Master, or not, I cannot say, but was told it was for this girl. So long had I been accustomed to make examinations in the Grammar and Primary Schools, that I felt a confidence in having done right, and such a summary return of my certificate only confirmed me in my impression. I then requested the Teacher to receive her back, if she should apply, and continue to instruct her, intending to make application at some other School. She did not, however, return to the School immediately; in fact, I was not aware of her being there, until the Chairman of the Board, some three weeks since, called my attention to the case, as reported in the "Remarks," when I

requested him to visit the school, immediately with me, and make inquiry of the Teacher. We found her as unprepared as myself for so bold and unwarrantable an attack. The Teacher told us the child was then in her seat. We questioned her (the child) as to her examination at the Grammar School; she said she was confused,—and when asked what the words "and," "but," &c., were, pronounced them correctly; for the inquiry of the Master was, "what 's that?" pointing to the word. We examined her in reading, spelling, and the letters of the alphabet. The Chairman said she was fully qualified for the Grammar School; and when we learned she had had but about six weeks' instruction since her rejection in April, he declared that she *must* have been qualified then. She was detained at home, by the sickness of her father, until the first of July. Subsequently I requested three of the Masters, who signed the "Remarks," to visit the School with me, and satisfy themselves as to the case; and I am happy to say, that, after a thorough examination of the qualifications of the girl, they expressed themselves as perfectly satisfied that she *now* knows the letters of the alphabet, and is qualified for the Grammar School. One of the gentlemen thought she *might* have learned all in six weeks! The other two, that she *must* have known her letters in April, but, owing to some peculiar circumstances, was prevented doing herself justice. I said the same to the Board. I also said to the Board, that, though the high character and standing of this school, (inferior to none of its class,) the untiring and devoted efforts of a thorough Teacher, and my own personal interest in the School, had thus publicly been libelled, I was willing to look at the case in a charitable light,

and considering the position of a timid girl, in a new and large place, filled with two hundred or more boys, before whom she was to be examined, I was willing to allow that her natural sensitiveness may have overpowered her, and caused the result spoken of in the pamphlet. I invited any and all of the Committee to examine the case for themselves; and if, after the most rigid examination, they could not sustain me, then, indeed, should I be amenable to their reproof, and unworthy of a seat at their Board.

To all the facts I had stated, I held myself ready to make affidavit.

Very respectfully, yours,

JOHN ODIN, Jr.

Boston, October 19, 1844.

Your Committee would remark, in this connexion, that several members of the Standing Committee, immediately after the report came to their knowledge, visited the School, and upon a most rigid examination of the girl, found that she was fully qualified, in every particular, for admission into the Grammar School.

Your Committee deem it unnecessary to make many comments in relation to these replies; the answers of the Teachers, are plain and to the point, and that of Dr. Odin, sufficiently conclusive.

We would however remark, that the small number of rejections within six years does not indicate a deterioration in the Schools, but tends to confirm the observation of His Honor the Mayor, that the improvement of the higher Schools is attributable, in part, "to the improved condition and better preparation of the children on admission from the Primary

Schools." There is an apparent inconsistency between these statements of the Masters and the opinion of the Mayor, which opinion these Masters have quoted in the former part of the "Remarks," and by that quotation signified that they believed his observation to be correct. The Board will perceive, from the facts presented, the direct opposition of all the statements of the Primary Teachers to all the statements of the pamphlet. We regret that we have been placed in such an attitude by these "Remarks," and cannot conceive that there was the least necessity for introducing our Primary Schools, into their (the Masters') controversy with Mr. Mann.

We feel that we should fail in our duty to the Schools under our care, were we to act on the defensive, less than we have done in this matter.

Respectfully submitted,

R. W. BAYLEY, *Chairman*,
FRANCIS BROWN,
JOHN WOART,
CHARLES BROOKS,
EBEN JONES, *Secretary*.

November 8, 1844.